

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

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Mayor to Unveil New Curb-Cut Design

Revised Curb Cut Standards Exceed Requirements of Americans With Disabilities Act

Houston Mayor Lee P. Brown will cut the ribbon today at 11:00 AM on a new type of curb-cut that increases crosswalk safety for all citizens, especially for those with disabilities. Joining him in the ceremony at the downtown corner of Bagby and Walker will be Diana Hobby, wife of former Lieutenant Governor Bill Hobby; Robert Bartlett, president of the Houston Council of the Blind, and Tom Rolen, Director of the City of Houston Department of Public Works and Engineering.

The new curb-cut, known as a directional type, meets the new City of Houston standards for curb-cuts aimed at enhancing crosswalk safety. Directional type curb-cuts clearly identify the pedestrian's path, aiming them directly across the street to the opposite corner. The traditional type of curb-cut, known as a shell or diagonal type, sits diagonally in the crosswalk corner and is less directive, especially for the visually impaired.

In addition to directional changes, the new curb-cut standards require that the ramp leading from the sidewalk to the street be painted a contrasting color and be slightly grooved. This contrast allows for better visibility for the visually impaired while the grooves provide a tactile indicator.

The City of Houston Department of Public Works and Engineering worked closely with the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities and the Houston Commission on Disabilities to promulgate the new curb-cut standards. At the direction of Mayor Brown, the new standards take effect today and apply to all new construction and the rebuilding of old curb-cuts.

The City of Houston paid for the curb-cuts at three of the corners of the intersection of Bagby at Walker. Swinerton Builders, the contractor building the new Hobby Center for the Performing Arts located at the intersection, is donating the cost of the other curb-cut.

When asked about the new curb cut standards, Mayor Brown replied, "When accessibility and safety are improved for citizens with disabilities, it is improved for all citizens. While our previous standards were compliant with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, these new standards take an additional step to protect our citizens whether they are in a wheelchair, visually impaired, on crutches or pushing a baby stroller."

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